

**Introduced by Senator La Malfa**

February 24, 2012

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An act to amend Section 4852 of, *and to add Article 8.7 (commencing with Section 5170) to Chapter 1 of Division 3 of*, the Vehicle Code, relating to vehicles.

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST

SB 1454, as amended, La Malfa. ~~Vehicles: license plates: number and character specifications.~~ *Vehicles: license plates: 8-letter license plates.*

**Existing**

(1) *Existing* law requires the Department of Motor Vehicles, upon registering a vehicle, to issue to the owner two partially or fully reflectorized license plates or devices for a motor vehicle and requires that the number and letter characters on the plates have a minimum height of  $2\frac{3}{4}$  inches, a minimum width of  $1\frac{1}{4}$  inches, and a minimum spacing of characters of  $\frac{5}{16}$  of an inch.

This bill would instead require that the number and letter characters on the license plates have a minimum width of  $1\frac{3}{16}$  inches, and a minimum spacing of characters of  $\frac{1}{4}$  of an inch.

(2) *Existing* law authorizes the Department of Motor Vehicles to issue or renew environmental license plates to provide revenue for the California Environmental License Plate Fund that indicate on the plates the combination of letters or numbers, or both, requested as a registration number by the applicant, to be displayed on the applicant's vehicle in lieu of regular license plates. Existing law also establishes

*procedures for the cancellation, transfer, or retention of the license plates and for the charging of additional fees.*

*This bill would establish an identical program to be known as the “8-letter license plate” program for the support of the Natural and Agricultural Open Space and State Recreational Support Fund which would be created by the bill. The bill would require that all revenue derived from the fees be deposited in the fund for specified purposes that include, among other things, subventions for open-space land programs, assistance to California fairs, and support of programs administered by the Department of Parks and Recreation.*

Vote: majority. Appropriation: no. Fiscal committee: yes.  
State-mandated local program: no.

*The people of the State of California do enact as follows:*

1 SECTION 1. Section 4852 of the Vehicle Code is amended to  
2 read:

3 4852. (a) License plates issued for motor vehicles, other than  
4 motorcycles, shall be rectangular in shape, 12 inches in length and  
5 six inches in width. The number and letter characters on the plates  
6 shall have a minimum height of two and three-quarter inches, a  
7 minimum width of one and three-sixteenths inches, and a minimum  
8 spacing between characters of one-quarter of ~~an~~ *one* inch.

9 (b) Motorcycle license plates shall measure seven inches in  
10 length and four inches in width, and the characters on the plates  
11 shall have a minimum height of one and one-half inches and a  
12 minimum width of nine-sixteenths ~~inches~~ *of one inch*, and shall  
13 have a minimum spacing between characters of three-sixteenths  
14 of ~~an~~ *one* inch.

15 SEC. 2. Article 8.7 (commencing with Section 5170) is added  
16 to Chapter 1 of Division 3 of the Vehicle Code, to read:

17  
18 Article 8.7. 8-Letter License Plates  
19

20 5170. *The purpose of this article is to provide revenue for the*  
21 *Natural and Agricultural Open Space and State Recreational*  
22 *Support Fund.*

23 5171. *Any person who is the registered owner or lessee of a*  
24 *passenger vehicle, commercial motor vehicle, motorcycle, trailer,*  
25 *or semitrailer registered or certificated with the department, or*

1 *who makes application for an original registration or renewal*  
2 *registration of that vehicle, may, upon payment of the fee*  
3 *prescribed in Section 5176, apply to the department for 8-letter*  
4 *license plates, in the manner prescribed in Section 5175, which*  
5 *plates shall be affixed to the passenger vehicle, commercial motor*  
6 *vehicle, motorcycle, trailer, or semitrailer for which registration*  
7 *is sought in lieu of regular license plates.*

8 *5172. The 8-letter license plates shall be the same color and*  
9 *design as regular passenger vehicle, commercial vehicle,*  
10 *motorcycle, or trailer license plates, and shall consist of any*  
11 *combination of numbers or letters, not exceeding eight positions*  
12 *and not less than eight positions, if there are no conflicts with*  
13 *existing passenger, commercial, trailer, motorcycle, or special*  
14 *license plates series or with Section 4851.*

15 *5173. As used in this article, “8-letter license plates,” means*  
16 *license plates or permanent trailer identification plates that have*  
17 *displayed upon them the registration number assigned to the*  
18 *passenger vehicle, commercial motor vehicle, motorcycle, trailer,*  
19 *or semitrailer for which a registration number was issued in a*  
20 *combination of letters or numbers, or both, requested by the owner*  
21 *or lessee of the vehicle.*

22 *5174. The 8-letter license plates shall be issued only to the*  
23 *registered owner or lessee of the vehicle on which they are to be*  
24 *displayed.*

25 *5175. (a) An applicant for issuance of 8-letter license plates*  
26 *or renewal of those plates in the subsequent year, pursuant to this*  
27 *article, shall file an application therefor in the form and by the*  
28 *date that the department may require, indicating the combination*  
29 *of letters or numbers, or both, requested as a registration number.*  
30 *There shall be no duplication of registration numbers, and the*  
31 *department may refuse to issue any combination of letters or*  
32 *numbers, or both, that may carry connotations offensive to good*  
33 *taste and decency or which would be misleading or a duplication*  
34 *of license plates provided for in Article 8 (commencing with Section*  
35 *5000).*

36 *(b) The department may cancel and order the return of any*  
37 *8-letter license plate before or after it is issued, containing any*  
38 *combination of letters, or numbers, or both, which the department*  
39 *determines carries connotations offensive to good taste and*  
40 *decency or that would be misleading. When the department orders*

1 any person to return any 8-letter license plate, containing any  
2 combination of letters or numbers, or both, which the department  
3 determines carries connotations offensive to good taste and  
4 decency or which would be misleading, the person so ordered may,  
5 in writing and within 10 days after receiving the order, demand a  
6 hearing, which shall be granted. Chapter 5 (commencing with  
7 Section 11500) of Part 1 of Division 3 of Title 2 of the Government  
8 Code shall apply to hearings provided for in this subdivision. A  
9 person ordered to return the plates shall either be reimbursed for  
10 any additional fees he or she paid for the plates pursuant to Section  
11 5176 or 5178 for the registration year in which they are recalled,  
12 or be given, at no additional cost, replacement 8-letter license  
13 plates, the issuance of which is in compliance with this code.

14 (c) The department may cancel and order the return of any  
15 8-letter license plate, without opportunity to be heard, as specified  
16 in subdivision (b), if the license plate issued is a duplication of  
17 license plates provided for in Article 8 (commencing with Section  
18 5000) or if the fee specified under subdivision (c) of Section 5176  
19 has not been paid.

20 5176. (a) In addition to the regular registration fee or a  
21 permanent trailer identification fee, the applicant shall be charged  
22 a fee of forty-eight dollars (\$48) for issuance of 8-letter license  
23 plates.

24 (b) In addition to the regular renewal fee or a permanent trailer  
25 identification fee for the vehicle to which the plates are assigned,  
26 an applicant for a renewal of 8-letter license plates shall be  
27 charged an additional fee of thirty-eight dollars (\$38). An applicant  
28 with a permanent trailer identification plate shall be charged an  
29 annual fee of thirty-eight dollars (\$38) for renewal of 8-letter  
30 license plates.

31 (c) When payment of renewal fees is not required as specified  
32 in Section 4000, the holder of any 8-letter license plate may retain  
33 the plate upon payment of an annual fee of thirty-eight dollars  
34 (\$38). The fee shall be due at the expiration of the registration  
35 year of the vehicle to which the 8-letter license plate was last  
36 assigned.

37 (d) Notwithstanding Section 9265, an applicant for a duplicate  
38 8-letter license plate shall be charged a fee of thirty-eight dollars  
39 (\$38).

1     5177. (a) All revenue derived from the fees provided for in  
2 this article shall be deposited in the Natural and Agricultural Open  
3 Space and State Recreational Support Fund.

4     (b) Not more than fifty cents (\$0.50) of the amount collected  
5 from each applicant pursuant to Section 5176 shall be set aside  
6 for use, upon appropriation by the Legislature, by the appropriate  
7 agency for the purpose of increasing public awareness of the  
8 8-letter license plate program.

9     5178. When a person who has been issued 8-letter license  
10 plates applies to the department for transfer of the plates to another  
11 passenger vehicle, commercial motor vehicle, trailer, or  
12 semitrailer, a transfer fee of thirty-eight dollars (\$38) shall be  
13 charged in addition to all other appropriate fees.

14     5179. When a person who has been issued 8-letter license  
15 plates sells, trades, or otherwise releases ownership of the vehicle  
16 upon which the 8-letter license plates have been displayed, that  
17 person shall immediately report the transfer of those plates to an  
18 acquired passenger vehicle, commercial vehicle, or trailer pursuant  
19 to Section 5178, unless the person determines to retain the plates  
20 pursuant to subdivision (c) of Section 5176.

21     5180. (a) The director may adopt rules and regulations as  
22 necessary to carry out the purposes of this article.

23     (b) When two or more separate series of special plates are  
24 authorized under this article in a period of one year, the director  
25 shall coordinate the administrative and technical procedures for  
26 preparation and issuance of the plates in order to control costs to  
27 the maximum extent practicable.

28     5181. (a) The department shall revise its Internet Web site to  
29 provide a direct link on the homepage to information on ordering  
30 8-letter license plates.

31     (b) When existing supplies of forms, publications, and signs  
32 have been depleted, or if those forms, publications, and signs are  
33 required to be revised in the normal course of operations, the  
34 department shall include in the replenishing supplies or the revised  
35 forms, publications, and signs information regarding 8-letter  
36 license plates and the procedures for applying for those plates.  
37 This subdivision applies only to forms, publications, and signs that  
38 advertise, facilitate the application for, or are an application for  
39 8-letter license plates.

1     5182. *The Natural and Agricultural Open Space and State*  
2 *Recreational Support Fund is hereby created and the revenues*  
3 *deposited in the fund, upon appropriation by the Legislature, shall*  
4 *be allocated equally for all of the following purposes:*

5     (a) *Subventions for open-space land programs authorized*  
6 *pursuant to Chapter 3 (commencing with Section 16140) of Part*  
7 *1 of Division 4 of Title 2 of the Government Code.*

8     (b) *Assistance to the Department of Food and Agriculture for*  
9 *California fairs, including the California Exposition and State*  
10 *Fair and county fairs and citrus fruit fairs, and district agricultural*  
11 *associations pursuant to Article 10 (commencing with Section*  
12 *19620) of Chapter 4 of Division 8 of the Business and Professions*  
13 *Code.*

14     (c) *Support of the Department of Parks and Recreation pursuant*  
15 *to Section 504 of the Public Resources Code.*